

Coge 9: The Albatross

You Wouldn't Want One Around Your Neck

The albatross is also known as the gooney bird. Gooney birds look terribly funny when they take off and when they land. They are clown birds. That is what our human gooney bird is: a clown. The gooney bird uses laughter and good cheer as his safe relationship. Laughter is a perfect safe relationship. Whoever dislikes the clown has to be an absolute boor. Remember the old line in westerns: "Smile when you say that, partner." That simply means that you can say anything if you cover it with a joke or a smile. So the way of the gooney bird is to turn himself or others into fools, using humor as a weapon and as a defense.

At work the gooney bird is the proverbial hail-fellow-well-met. As long as you do not have to spend too much time around him, he brings lightness and good cheer into the day. He is adept at making the clam open its shell, the porcupine shed its quills, and the peacock pull in its plumage. True, he can become somewhat tiresome, especially if the edge is off his humor. But what the hell, he's one fine fellow.

There is another species of gooney bird which one occasionally meets. This is the bird who never quite makes the grade. He tries to be humorous, he tries to liven things up and have an ever-ready joke; but he seems just unable to pull it off. Like all safe relationships, this gooney bird does not abandon his attempt to entertain. Instead he becomes a caricature of himself. Then his stories become trite, his humor off-color and his remarks more biting than funny. He consoles himself, however, with days of past glory and occasional good lines and continues to think of himself as terribly humorous and entertaining. But for everyone around him, he is simply awkward and something of an embarrassment.

At home the gooney bird is less enjoyable. After a while humor grows thin if that is all there is to a person. Humor entertains, attracts, enchants; but in the end it grows thin and of itself does not sustain a relationship. The gooney bird at home is a source of frequent frustration. Pretty soon the children or the wife or the girl friend have heard the same jokes enough times that they are no longer the least bit funny. But still he continues because this is the gooney bird's safe relationship. Soon the family starts to drift away, wanting to spend as little time as possible with the clown. The gooney bird becomes more frantic and tries to learn new jokes to bring home as prizes. They work once, if at all, and then are gone. The gooney bird is thrown back on himself and that does not make for much, for making himself or others into the fool is the only thing the gooney bird knows.

With both 'friends and people at the office, the gooney bird can be quite entertaining—if they do not know him for too long. Over time, they

become like family and his storehouse of jokes is soon used up. Then his attempt to monopolize and control the situation becomes distasteful and he is gradually isolated from one circle of friends after-another.